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AUTHOR	Estola, Eila; Syrjala, Leena
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ABSTRACT

Finnish teachers were asked to describe school reform and changes in the classroom and to discuss how they translated the moral language of administration into their own language as teachers. The study focused on a comprehensive school reform intended to enhance educational quality in a welfare state by providing all children equal opportunities for social progress regardless of socioeconomic status. The reform involved developing a comprehensive 9-year elementary school system. This reform included a service-providing school with alternative options available to students and without remedial instruction. Analysis of previous research and of teachers' narratives about the school reform indicated that teachers believed that while the goal of equality in the new system was good, the change might have been achieved by developing the old system. Teachers believed that administrators left them without support to tackle the problems of daily school life under the reform. Teachers felt that despite the lack of realism in public rhetoric about change, the reform ultimately gave them more freedom and encouraged them to examine topics that had not been discussed before. However, the researchers concluded that the voices of teachers are not heard in the official discourse of school reform. (Contains 31 references.) (SM)

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Whose Reform – Teachers' Voices from Silence

Eila Estola, senior researcher
University of Oulu
Department of Educational Sciences and Teacher Education
PL 2311
90014 Oulun yliopisto
Finland
Phone: + 358-8-553 4211
Fax: +358-8-553 4250
Email: eestola@ktk.oulu.fi

Leena Syrjälä, professor
University of Oulu
Department of Educational Sciences and Teacher Education
PL 2211
90014 Oulun yliopisto
Finland
Phone: +358-8-553 3687
Fax: +358-8-553 3744
Email: lsyrjala@ktk.oulu.fi

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E. Estola

In the 1970s, the Department of Education in Helsinki was housed in an old two-floor building close to the Market Square and the Cathedral. I always felt confined there and was not really inspired by my minor subject studies. It was spring, and many things were going on at the university. We were all becoming increasingly aware of the radical student policies. The canteen was a much more interesting place than the cramped old library. While I was studying for my final exam in educational science, I heard that the comprehensive school committee were writing their report upstairs, and that the professor usually asked a few questions about this statewide school reform in his oral examination. I therefore had to find out personally about this major upheaval of school life in the 1970s. Afterwards, I have often wondered how far from the reality of school life students of educational science were at that time and suspected that the committee working upstairs never got closer to real life than the students downstairs - and we knew nothing. For me, the school reform remained a mystery, and I have spent a lifetime trying to shed light on that mystery, fully aware that there are no correct solutions.

This is how Leena, the older of us, recalls her experiences of the major school reform as a young student. While analyzing teacher biographies for the past few years, we have often come across people who have labelled us as outmoded opponents of change. Such comments have been provoked especially by our stories of teachers who tell about their vocation, love of children and joy

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of work. Our opponents claim we have only received stories from elderly school mistresses nostalgic for the good old times. Although we have also described the conflicts and battles of teachers in the turmoil of school reform, we have been criticized for romanticizing the careers of some exceptional teachers, which actually involve no change but rather stagnation and standstill.

We therefore posed ourselves this question: are we still as far from the real world of school life and the real changes as we were as young students? Do we understand sufficiently well what the efforts to change school really mean and how teachers perceive school reforms? Sigrun Gudmundsdottir has described school reforms as messages from politicians to teachers and into classrooms. The reception of messages has been described (Cuban 1993) as a hurricane that makes the surface of the sea churn with waves, but leaves the deeper layers calm.

While analyzing the biographical story of one teacher, Helena (Estola & Syrjälä 2000), we realized that although the justifications for change may be external to school and also echo the cultural traditions and the political situation, real change can only take place when teachers integrate the idea of change into their own intentions. Helena did not spontaneously tell about school reforms, until we asked her about them. Nevertheless, Helena had been developing her work more than most others, but she talked about the changes she had accomplished in her own personal style and through actions taking place in her classroom.

We hence considered it interesting to find out what, if anything, teachers say about changes and school reforms. The idea of school reform as a message encouraged us to analyze change as a moral voice, which speaks in a different language in each context. Our assumption was based on the findings that have made a distinction between the administrative language of justice and teachers' language of care (Noddings 1992; Thayor-Bacon 1998). The former has also been called the language of the father and the latter the language of the mother. The language of administration is the language of justice, which aims at action compatible with certain collective principles or rules, while the basic principles of the language of care are relatedness and responsiveness. We therefore asked how teachers (most of whom are women) describe school reforms and changes in the classrooms and how they 'translate' the moral language of administration into their own language of teachers.

We decided to focus on the comprehensive school reform, which was the biggest reform of educational policy ever implemented in Finland. The reform basically aimed to enhance educational equality in a welfare state by providing all children equal opportunities for social progress regardless of where they lived and what social status they had. Prior to that, Finland had had a parallel school system, which included elementary school for 8 years and an optional junior

secondary school, for which volunteers applied and wrote an entrance examination. Finnish children start school at the age of 7, and there is no compulsory pre-school or kindergarten[1].

This profound reform of the structure of elementary school took place in the 1970s, when the 9-year comprehensive school system was implemented. The state was to take care of all citizens and to provide welfare for all. The comprehensive school reform aimed to solve the problems of basic education in a manner almost opposite to those applied elsewhere in Europe, with the exception of easternmost Europe. The development of comprehensive school over the following decades can be divided into three stages.

The first stage was the transitional comprehensive school with a streaming system from 1972 to about 1985. This was followed by the mature comprehensive school, where streaming was replaced by remedial instruction, up till the early 1990s. (Volanen & Mäkinen 1997; Volanen 2000.)

The comprehensive school reform was a clearly politico-administrative reform, which was implemented by issuing administrative directives. The reform was planned and implemented through extensive committee work, and the Finnish parliament finally passed a law and a statute on comprehensive school. The reform was accomplished as a technical procedure, in-service education was provided and new materials were made available to teachers.

The third stage of comprehensive school, however, has been more teacher-oriented, and the contribution of teachers to change has been regarded as increasingly important. Simultaneously, there has been a more pervasive change towards decentralization in the administrative culture. The third stage has generated a service-providing school with alternative options available to pupils and without remedial instruction. A further typical feature has been the severe cuts on financial resources justified by the economic recession. The school of equal educational opportunities has become a school of options and alternatives. This, in turn, has enhanced the role of the parents and hence the direct impacts of differences in social status on education and educational choices. The direction of development has been reversed. (Volanen & Mäkinen 1997; Volanen 2000.)

[1] From 2001 onwards, municipalities will be obliged to provide pre-school education for all children aged 6. The children, however, have no obligation to attend.

Reading Stories

We have read teacher biographies with an eye on how teachers talk about school reforms and change. Our approach is narrative and hence inherently concerned with change (Clandinin & Connelly 2000). Geertz (1995, 1-2) claimed that nothing can ever be described as a static thing because everything keeps changing – *there seems to be no place to stand so as to locate just what has altered and how.*

We have read biographical narratives produced by teachers for a research project in different ways and in response to different instructions (Teachers in Change; http://wwwedu.oulu.fi/homepage/life/Englplan.HT). Part of the material came from interviews, while another part consisted of written autobiographies. Some of the stories were produced in response to a general instruction to tell about their lives. Some material came from a biographical writing competition, for which the participants were encouraged to write especially about the changes in their work consequent to changes in society and school.

Having read more than a hundred stories, we were astonished at how little these teachers talked about the comprehensive school reform or any other school reform. Instead, they described in detail changes at the classroom level instigated by factors other than administrative reforms. We especially noticed that the teachers commented on these changes emotionally and argumentatively, sometimes with a sense of discordance and disappointment, sometimes with fervour and enthusiasm, as if the rhythm of the narrative had reflected the variable rhythm of everyday teaching (cf. Connelly et al. 1997).

'Voice' is a concept that has been used to refer to very many things (Elbaz 1991; Freeman 1994). For us, 'voice' is a metaphor applicable to teachers, who act in contexts where they hear and participate in different discourses. Wertsch (1991, 51-52) has pointed out: 'Meaning can come into existence only when two voices come into contact: when the voice of the listener responds to the voice of the speaker'. Teachers are implementing the comprehensive school reform through the discourses in which they participate or through the voices they use. We, as researchers, wish to continue this chain: having listened to the voices of teachers, we aim to generate meanings for these teacher narratives through our own academic discourse.

We approached our material based on Freeman's (1994) argumentation that researchers should analyze language as a socially constructed discourse. The substance of teacher narratives is shaped by the way in which they are told. Freeman suggests that, apart from assuming

teachers' knowledge to be evident in the language they use (representative use of language), we should pay more attention to how data are presented in language. 'The presentational view assumes that language is both the vehicle and the substance of participants' meanings. ...Thus in this presentational approach, the teacher's words are taken for what they are as well for what they say. To work with language data one must look at not only *what* is said but also *how* it is said.' (Freeman 1994, 83). According to Freeman, we need three approaches to understand how teachers construct their knowledge through language. Firstly, we should analyze linguistic expressions, for 'language depends on a speech community to create and sustain meanings' (p. 85). If, therefore, the language of administration is different, teachers have to translate it into their own language. How is that done? Secondly, we should consider the 'voice', and thirdly, we should find out where the voice comes from. 'If voice is a fabric of language, one needs to examine the references and sources for the various threads out of which it is woven.'(p. 87)

The metaphor of voice also inherently implies that not all voices are equally loud. Teacher research has frequently shown that teachers' voices may not be audible (Elbaz 1991). We were especially intrigued by this idea of silence and inaudible voice. The paper of Rogers et al. (1999) helped us to read the stories in a way that brought us closer to topics that are difficult to talk about or hard to identify. These authors highlight the need to analyze language and discourse. They point out, for example, that language as negation expresses an idea or feeling through the explicit negation of its opposite. One of our informants wrote: *'We civic school teachers never had high hopes about comprehensive school. We would not lose much anyway'*. Through negation, the positive is implicitly present: according to the writer, someone or some people had 'high hopes'. Rogers et al. also pointed out that language is used to express such things as the process of remembering, uncertainty, the process of imagining, identifying, and selecting. Our informants were sometimes uncertain about a given state of affairs: *' **I guess** I was, by my natural disposition, ahead of my time'*, said one teacher, and another said: *'our task was **probably** to test the new school for all its shortcomings'*. These expressions imply uncertainty as well as the possibility and even probability of holding a different view. Evasions were sometimes identifiable in expressed emotion or opinion. One teacher wrote as follows: *'I do **not really** understand why we should have a reform for the sake of reform'*. The words 'not really' signal uncertainty. The sentence implies that the writer suspects the problem is her failure to understand.

Rogers et al. (1999) further pointed out that the language of silence is the most elusive language of the unsayable. The mere absence of some information does not necessarily indicate silence. This comment is especially relevant to our research, where so many teachers said nothing

about the school reform in their stories. What does this mean? What kind of response to the administrative discourse of reform is non-response? Silence is also an interesting moral question, as it is related to the general ability to hear voices in society. It is also very clearly a matter related to power (Lather 1991, Wertsch 1990). Could we even postulate that the voices of teachers are voices of women, which are intentionally not heard or understood. As (2000) has analyzed the ways of subjugating women, and one of her arguments is the practice of making women invisible. The voice of someone who is invisible is certainly not very loud. Could researchers be sensitive enough to hear even the nearly inaudible voices? We wanted to try. In some instances we will also comment on metaphors, which may explicate something that is otherwise unsayable. Lakoff & Johnson (1999) have described metaphors as language with a material background, which is why they reflect well the human experiences. Metaphors are 'dense descriptions', which effectively reflect the narrator's experiences in symbolic language or by juxtaposing two different phenomena. Teachers were described as runners with *'muscles full of lactic acid'* or as a choir who *' sang to the conductor's cue'*, while one teacher said she *'felt completely bogged down by the formal teaching methods'*.

The analysis has proceeded from the whole to the parts and back to a whole. We started by reading the stories from the viewpoint of the transitions in the school reform, concentrating on the introduction of comprehensive school, the period of establishment and the reversal in the developmental trends. We also identified the themes discussed by the teachers in their narratives. After that, we applied the ideas of Freeman and Rogers et al. to our analysis of the teachers' narratives about the school reform. Since we consider life a narrative that is being told (Bruner 1987), we also read the stories produced by individual teachers as narratives of multi-voiced discourse. The parts acquire their meaning through the whole (cf. Clandinin & Connelly 2000). We used two contexts as reference and background for individual episodes or descriptions: the official narrative of the comprehensive school reform and the individual narrator's own story. In this way, we ensured that both types of discourse were covered in the analysis.

Below, we will re-tell parts of some teacher's stories of reforms and change. At first, we will consider their stories of the public discourse. They mostly describe the public discourse as advertising and promoting the school reform on the one hand and as criticizing and blaming teachers on the other. Secondly, we will discuss the teachers' 'own' way of talking about change in the classroom. This is discourse in the teachers' own language, and they hence find it familiar, emotional and morally committed.

' Everybody Can Learn Everything' – Constrained by the Public Rhetoric

Many teachers' stories about the comprehensive school reform comment on the public discourse. The reform is approached from three perspectives. Firstly, there was discourse about the goals and objectives of comprehensive school. Secondly, there are stories about the belief that in-service education could serve as a tool for implementing the reform. Thirdly, there are descriptions about the changes in the substance and methods of instruction brought about by the reform, which were expected to establish the reform in the classrooms.

According to the teachers, however, the reform was not so simple. Teachers live in the world of ◆different practice. The administrative practice and its moral language could not be directly translated into the language of practical instruction, where different moral rules prevail (cf. Silfverberg 1996). Teachers' stories are woven into a discourse that tries to explain the public discourse and to make it understandable to themselves.

The overall goal of educational policy, i.e. equality in education, is unanimously advocated as an important moral principle: *'The comprehensive school reform was a necessary prerequisite for equality. In the old times, many of the talented children in remote regions had no opportunities for education. Comprehensive school placed all children on the same starting line'.* This is a comment by a teacher who had him/herself acquired teacher education in the midst of major hardships during the post-war period of poverty. Without exception, all teachers advocate the goal of equality. This also reflects the contemporary political ideal of a welfare state. Teachers present the goal of the reform as 'necessary' or, as above, something that warrants 'absolute' commitment, because 'all children were to be given equal opportunities for education regardless of their parents' place of residence, economic status or education'. The manner of writing reflects the teachers' serious attitude towards this public discourse. There are no deprecatory comments, no irony, no disapproval.

But there is also teacher discourse that, though it does not deny the value of the goal, still suggests that the same goal might also have been attained by developing the old parallel school system. *'Civic school could have been developed into a real 'citizens' school, as the name implies, a basic school for part of the student population. But when people try to reach the skies, they tend to forget that you can climb the mountain via different routes and still get there'.* The reform is described as an effort to 'reach the skies' and 'to climb a mountain' via a single route, though there would have been others, too.

The public language used at the early stages of comprehensive school is considered exaggerating and promotional by several informants. *'The leading idea of comprehensive school was that everybody can learn everything. Only teachers understand how utopian that idea is. All of a sudden, every pupil was to be linguistically and mathematically talented and to reach a high level knowledge in all subjects. Remedial instruction was like a magic wand that was whisked to clear the learner's path of rocks and tree stumps. No-one was to stand out from the crowd or to be better than the others. That was democracy.'*

According to Maija's story, the language used to advertise comprehensive school was unrealistic. The pupils were to be talented 'all of a sudden' and 'were to' reach a high level in all subjects. Maija's ironic comment is a response to the finger-pointing public discourse. Remedial instruction, the magic wand, would eliminate the differences between individual pupils and help to establish democracy. Maija's story presents the reform as a process whereby politicians tried to persuade teachers to see problems where they themselves wanted to see them (Rust 1993, 18). Maija's story also shows that the public rhetoric of marketing campaigns was used to persuade teachers to view the problems of learning and teaching from the political perspective. We can also infer that no-one asked the teachers about their view of the problems and their solutions.

According to the stories, the public discourse was markedly shaped by the media. Maija writes like this: *'It was precisely at that time that the public media also attacked the school and the teachers. The students' association started spreading the 'student's red book', which was very provocative about the despotism of teachers. It was easy enough to find a pop singer who had been neglected by a teacher and given a bad mark in music, though he was such a star now. Listening to him, you probably agreed with the teacher. The television also recruited people to produce documents or sketches of teachers as military monsters waving a pointer, shabbily dressed and with their hair done up in a bun, who sent pupils flying into the corner or under the desk. In reality, however, the teacher is like an actor on stage, facing an ever critical audience and therefore fashionable and well-coiffured.'*

In this narrative, Maija engages in a dialogue with the image of teachers propagated by the media. The comprehensive school reform is presented as discourse about teachers as monsters and tyrants unable to understand children. Maija's comment is serious, well argued and based on personal experience. Teachers have to carefully consider their appearance and behavior. This has also been pointed out by Mitchell & Weber (1999).

Maija then goes on: *'Newspapers published reports about the new comprehensive school: no-one will have to repeat a grade, no-one will be failed in exams, and therefore no-one*

will need to study. That lulled the pupils into a false notion of laziness and negligence'. This theme was brought up by many teachers. *'Comprehensive school is a happy school'*, they proclaimed. *'Everybody can learn everything at comprehensive school, though there is no homework.'* Teachers tell about their feelings of guilt under the public scrutiny of the administrators and the media. Pupils would certainly learn if teachers could teach them well enough. Ingrid Carlgren (1997) has described this phenomenon in the course of the Swedish school reform. According to her, teachers have been subjugated in the reforms, and their experiences have not been taken seriously. The reformers have insisted on discussion about what professional knowledge *should* be rather than what it is. *'Teachers are expected to do and know something other they do and know'.*
(p. 48 original italics)

At the beginning of this chapter, we pointed out that in-service education was expected to provide a solution to the problems of the transitional stage. *'We learnt new things, acquired education, went out for the weekends to listen to people wiser than ourselves, who were often unprepared and underestimated their audience. We did whatever we were ordered and never complained, and no-one ever wondered if we had enough resources for all that.'* The efforts of teachers are here described as earnest, but the quote also implies that administrators looked down on teachers, underestimating them and denying the real problem, i.e. the possible burnout of teachers. According to the narratives, teachers were left alone to tackle with the problems of everyday life. One teacher describes the official propaganda in favor of comprehensive school, which, *'in retrospect, was very naïve'*: the principles of comprehensive school were publicly advocated by the director general of the National Board for Education and other officials. The education was given to large crowds and was hardly useful at all. All discussion remained at a general level and never addressed the problems that occupied teachers. No-one cared about the real situation of teachers and pupils, nor did the teachers' union help.

The structural reform promoted by the administrative discourse was partly a terminological reform. One teacher tells about this as follows: *'The new school was described in a new terminology: "discipline" was replaced by "optimal working conditions" and "class schedule" by "work plan". Even "school", a word with such an honourable tradition, was replaced by junior and senior "level".'* Teachers considered the new terminology a means of the public rhetoric to alter the traditional premises of teaching. For the writer, the word 'school' had a clearly more profound meaning that the more technical and performance-oriented 'level'. Teachers were concerned about what they were and what they were expected to be, and possibly also that school life, in the long run, would really be transformed into a technical performance. This is often

the key issue in discussions of stability and change. The new terms were probably the most concrete indication of the tendency described by Hargreaves (1997) that teachers have been expected to change themselves and their work, as if change were a mere technical solution.

The third topic of public discourse was the changes in curricula and teaching methods. The teachers tell about the changes in subjects, such as the introduction of the first foreign language on grade 3 and the availability of technical work and textile work to both girls and boys. The descriptions mostly lack involvement, and the narrators seem to have an outsider's perspective to the topic, although the system of subjects, for example, certainly had direct consequences for their daily work. 'New math', however, inspired a few scathing comments: '*And we went to the extremes with some nonsensical experiments. For example, the pupils were not taught the multiplication table systematically, but pieces on paper were pinned up on the walls and the children were expected to pick them up just like that. And all mathematical instruction went wide off the mark. The new math and the set theory and things were so alien to real life that the kids got completely lost. And we, too, had a hard time with the math.*'

This teacher discusses the failure of the experimental education advocated in the public discourse. The message of her story is that the teachers tried to follow the instructions, although, based on their experiential knowledge, they doubted the success of such 'nonsensical' projects. The teachers also had a 'hard time' with the experiment. Another teacher recalls the same thing, pointing out that the new math was 'buried in silence'. New mathematics was actually also dropped from the official curriculum.

The rhythm of narrative sometimes seems to reflect the fast pace at which the public discourse envisioned the change to take place. One teacher gives this breathless account: '*There were multiple-choice tests, there was the spiral method, there was the question of fixed-grade or alternative instruction, and always something new on the way, and the teachers were like race runners with their muscles full of lactic acid, painfully struggling on.*'

Some stories comment on the new substance of the comprehensive school as a victory of commercialism. '*Along with the comprehensive school reform, textbooks were naturally also reformed, and that was partly a good thing. ...But, but... very soon it began to seem that textbooks are a good marketing niche for the publishers. I must admit that many the teacher's guides were really good, but was it necessary to publish new ones so often?*' Did the comprehensive school reform also benefit people aiming to profit financially from the school system?

The discourse about the comprehensive school reform also includes positive stories. Despite all their comments on the lack of realism in the public rhetoric, some teachers admit that the reform

ultimately gave them more freedom and encouraged them even to take up topics that had not been discussed before. *'The comprehensive school reform resulted in a liberation, and that made it possible to adopt a different role. We had the new math experiment and these teacher meetings and educational sessions, and I found them positive'.*

There are very few comments on the mature years of comprehensive school. Some teachers describe that period as a good time for teachers: the groups of pupils were small, the financial resources were good and there were enough materials and tools. The silence about this period probably indicates that teachers concentrated on their work in serious silence. One teacher considers this period almost ideal: *'The system of streaming was replaced by the idealistic view that "everybody can learn everything". I disagreed then, and I disagree even more now. In other ways, however, the situation at school was ideal. The group size became smaller. When you have sixteen pupils in a group, you get to know each one of them personally'.* Even this informant starts by pointing out the lack of realism of the public rhetoric, but then goes on contentedly to comment on the things that made teaching easier. This description highlights the importance of the close teacher – pupil relations, which became possible in the smaller groups (Thayor-Bacon 1998). Teachers were now better able to respond to the needs of individual pupils. It is possible to read between the lines that there was less stress and more time to concentrate on teaching (cf. Olson et al. 1999).

According to the teachers, the current stage of development and the related administrative discourse are taking the school system into a wrong direction. *'The new school legislation is ready for implementation. The amendments have provoked active and polemic discussion in the media. One topic that churned up emotions and opinions is the question of whether schools should be allowed to compete with each other and the consequent fear of educational inequality. I admit I am afraid of the possible invasion of the American school model, which would, if the worst case scenario turned out true, set off an awful rat race. What will happen to small country schools? What will happen to the children whose parents are not interested in their offspring even now?* ***What will happen to the average teacher in an average school?'***

The narrator is worried about the tendency that only the best and most successful individuals are appreciated in society. The 'average teacher' and the 'average school' are nothing but failures any more. The same problem is mentioned by a teacher who comments on the discourse concerning teaching versus education. He/she defends the contemporary school: *'If I am correct in my interpretation that teaching is becoming more important than education, it may happen that the whole infrastructure of teachers' work turns upside down. As far as I can see, that would seriously undermine the position of teachers, and the prospect is certainly not a pleasant one. We have a*

good school system and we have been investing a lot of effort in gradually developing it within the current framework, though we have sometimes felt very inadequate.'

Teachers had to respond to the public discourse as topics of this discourse, defending themselves, often as outsiders rather than subjects. No-one ever asked teachers how they were coping, but they were left alone to wrestle with their feelings of inadequacy amidst the reforms (Nias 1993). *'In the middle of all this, they forgot all about teachers, who, after all, were the ones to carry out this reform. There was naturally also matter-of-fact information, but it was mostly drowned in the hype. The teachers did a huge effort in this contradictory situation, trying to respond to the demands of both present and future society and all the challenges posed to them'.*

But there are also changes in which teachers are narratively involved. When we enter the classroom, we hear different stories.

'I Could Have an Opinion of My Own About Teaching'

This was a comment by a teacher who was able to attend in-service education in the late 1980s, which was *'notably different from the coercive training at the beginning of comprehensive school'*. While attending the course, the teacher was encouraged to think what he/she personally wanted from teaching, what she expected the pupils to want, and how she could make these two sets of expectations mutually compatible in foreign language instruction. Temporally, the quotation refers to the mature stage of comprehensive school, when many teachers took off time to pursue further studies. In-service education had finally established a better interface with teaching. Teacher – pupil interaction was considered important, and outsiders were sponsoring development projects. Gordon's book about the wise teacher and educational courses based on these guidelines were described by many teachers as having opened their eyes to the importance of teacher – pupil interaction.

The change in the classroom often seems different from the discourse of the school reform. The 'voice' that motivates teachers to change may be heard from any of several directions. What is common to all narratives of change, however, that this voice is stimulating, encouraging and calling (cf. Hargreaves 1997). The language teacher who wrote the above quotation says that she was presented a *'revolutionary array of new matters to be thought about and applied in class'*. During the course, she was asked what she wanted herself and how important the teacher's contribution is. *'I really began to think about things and, for the first time, it occurred to me that I*

could have some opinions about teaching. Up till then I had been like a good girl, listening to the instructions and advice from higher up and feeling guilty for not being able to accomplish everything. I had believed that outsiders really know better than the teachers what we should teach and how'.

This teacher gives a true and serious account of the impact of in-service education on her. Without irony or understatement, she tells about a feeling of empowerment and a new kind of confidence in her own resources. Prior to that, she had considered herself subject to the administration and forced to 'listen like a good girl', because there was no other way. She had lacked faith in her own competence. This lack of courage should be viewed against the background of the public discourse and the moral voice of administration. Teachers were viewed as implementers rather than developers of the reform. One teacher said that she *'felt really bogged down by the formal teaching methods'*, and as soon as it was possible, she abandoned this formality and enrolled on a course. This teacher had been secretly doing things not considered 'good' teaching both mentally and even in class. She took every possibility to renew things, and in-service education provided a good opportunity for this.

Personal change was sometimes also triggered by the media. One teacher tells about the time before comprehensive school: *"Back in the 1960s, I once read in the newspaper about a study which had indicated that 80 % of 4-year-olds have creative talent. At the age of of 8 only 40 % are creatively talented, and at the age of 20 only 3 % are still creative. This means that school suppresses creativity in children! This news really hit home. I decided: that will not happen in my class. I began to read about creativity. I enrolled on a course. I nurtured creativity at all times, during every lesson, in all things I did. Based on this, I began to alter my own attitude and my way of working with the children. I felt I was growing and renewing mentally, and my work seemed meaningful and rewarding. I worked much harder than previously, but that was not important. I tried to give the children personal experiences and considered it important that everybody should have feelings of success. I built a home for active hands. One day, I hauled the teacher's desk down from the podium. I remember that the school inspector wondered about that. Some time later I had the podium removed altogether and brought in a large carpet, a 'magic carpet'. We gathered on that carpet to read stories. The parents even consented to have their children bring small cushion to school. I am sure the children learnt better. And what was most important: school was fun.*

This teacher is telling a story of change, describing her commitment and willingness to even face other people's astonishment to promote her cause (cf. Lauriala 1997). Her story highlights

the gradual progress of change. The change was triggered by the teacher's personal decision to seek a solution to a problem. She defined the problem herself, although her initial motivation came from a newspaper article. Having identified the problem, she began to study and make changes. It was a major change to take the teacher's desk down from the podium. Only later did she dare to remove the podium altogether. The teacher's story is multi-voiced, including the astonished comments by the inspector and probably also the parents, who 'consented…'

When teachers tell stories of change in the classroom, it is evident that this change never coincides with the official school reforms. Many teachers have accomplished changes in their classrooms that are only later introduced by the official discourse as topics for public discussion. The motivation may date back to their own teacher education. '*At one point, there was this public discussion about total education. I was confused and desperately tried to see what was new in this issue. Then I realized: they were the same principles of Aukusti Salo that I had learnt at seminar and had been applying ever since. It was a blessed thing they were discussed more widely now and were gaining wider acceptance*'.

This teacher comments on public discussion and points out that the 'new' topic was actually old and familiar to her. While reading the narratives, we came across several similar comments. Gudmundsdottir (2000) has also seen the same phenomenon in Norwegian classrooms. Teachers implement changes long before they are 'publicly' advocated. This also puts school reforms in a new light. We have a challenge here: How could school reforms establish a dialogue where teachers' voices would be really heard. Or can they ever?

Voices of Silence - Discussing Reforms and Changes

This inquiry addressed reform as a moral voice to which teachers always have to respond. We also assumed that the moral voices of administration and the classroom are different because different practices produce different language and hence also different moral principles of what is good and right (Hansen 1998). The stories produced by teachers about school reforms and change also included many different kinds of narrative.

At first, we recognized the silence. Rogers et al. (1999) consider it one way to identify the unsayable. The most striking silence was the failure of many teachers to say anything at all about the comprehensive school reform. By silence, speakers can make their interlocutor, in this case the public discourse, poignantly aware of their refusal to listen to the interlocutor's voice. In some stories, the complete silence was punctuated by a single brief remark: 'the comprehensive school

reform came', but such a comment is like silence in that the speaker never went on to comment further, but moved on to another topic.

The probable reason for why teachers speak more about the early than the later stages of the comprehensive school reform is that the early stages were more revolutionary, threatening and, in retrospect, possibly even more exciting. This seems to gain support from the finding that people usually tell about the turning-points in their life. Gradually, however, the reform lost its edge, its rhetoric was forgotten, and teaching continued in classrooms, changing and developing within the framework of the 'regularities' of classroom work and in the ways outlined by teachers after having harnessed the discourse of the reform to serve their own intentions.

As the stories quoted above have shown, teachers tell about reforms in different ways. An ironic tone probably indicates that the narrator finds the public rhetoric unrealistic. A submissive tone may reflect the ways of women to respond to authoritarian and patriarchal administration, trying to cope. '*Teachers made a huge effort in this contradictory situation, trying to live up to the demands of both contemporary and future society and the challenges posed to them. Moreover, the majority of teachers were, and still are, women*'.

Some informants responded to the public rhetoric by proposing a different alternative and acting accordingly. This 'discourse of active resistance' reflects the speaker's detachment: 'you can say what you want, but we will act like this'. Such comments were often included in the stories about how comprehensive school was advertised as a school without homework, where pupils would learn everything without any effort or work. As far as this matter was concerned, teachers acted in their classrooms based on their own knowledge and moral, knowing perfectly well that children actually learn different things in a slightly different ways. The reform also included discourse of opportunities, and without that the comprehensive school reform might appear in an unnecessarily gloomy light. Underneath the advertising or accusing rhetoric, teachers also discovered positive aspects, opportunities for change, a new kind of freedom and a new kind of openness and exchange of professional ideas in further education.

Another language that teachers use to talk about change is the personal language of relationships and emotions, and this is the practical language of the classroom. Above, we illustrated the personal motivation and background of these changes. They were sometimes related to reforms, but they were always filtered through the teacher's own identity and moral horizon (Taylor 1989). These stories were not directly related to the public rhetoric, although occasional references were made to such matters as the 'inspector's astonishment' or the 'parents' consent', the latter of which seems to imply that the teacher was not even sure of the parents' attitude to change.

Thus, when we analyze school reforms as moral voices and messages into classrooms, we should ask what kind of messages they are. We used as an example the biggest reform of educational policy ever accomplished in Finland and teachers' comments concerning it. The teacher narratives were retrospective, but we should bear in mind that they were told from the viewpoint of the present. Events are always interpreted in the contemporary light, and the 'purpose of and audience for the retellings may color what is told' (Mitchell & Weber 1999, 12). We had, however, stories told for different purposes and addressed to different organizations, and we can hence consider the outcome of the analysis sufficiently diverse. We also had stories told by male and female teachers of different grades and of different ages, living in different parts of Finland (though a large majority were women). We have tried to describe the modes of telling and to demonstrate the diversity and mutual differences in the teacher narratives. At first, we decided to focus on the voices of silence. During the analysis, we especially observed the manner and tone or writing and the choice of words. (Rogers et. al 1999). We became convinced that the voices of teachers are not heard in the official discourse of school reforms. Although the justification for reform is often a need to improve the quality of education, a further aim over the past few years has been to cut down expenditure. In the western countries, justice is often equated with the maximization of financial profit, and decisions are made accordingly. For teachers, therefore, reform has mostly meant larger classes, less money for special education, fewer subsidies, etc. It is simultaneously forgotten that schools and teachers have narrative histories, and in order to make reforms real changes, it is not enough to consider teachers' knowledge, values and background, but also their hopes, intentions, and wishes for the future (Clandinin & Connelly 1998, 156). Reforms should, therefore, be approached as moral issues, always in relation to teacher's personal and professional values.

The everyday work of teachers, however, is based on a justice where the children's needs are the primary criterion (Thayor-Bacon 1998). Teachers evaluate changes in terms of the effects they have on the interpersonal relations in the classroom, and often this change is part of teachers' silent practical knowledge, though they are not always personally aware of it (Walsh et al. 1991). Clandinin and Connelly (1998, 155) argue that changes at school are changes in social situations and also include some improvised responses.

School reforms are filtered into the classroom through the teacher's professional identity. Hansen (1998) pointed out that the moral lies in the practice and that different practices give rise to different morals. Different practices also give rise to different languages of practice (Johnson 1989). Teachers may also be embarrassed by the fact that reforms seldom address the problems they encounter in their daily work. At the present, there are both national and

international signs indicating that teachers' voices are even less audible than before in the discussion of reforms. This may ultimately turn out to be a problem. Although more and more people realize that the keys to change are held by the teachers themselves, it may happen that administration and everyday teaching continue to diverge. The ongoing process of globalization and the furious pursuit of economic profit will probably result in increasingly business-based school administration. Who has the strength to go on speaking for ever if nobody listens? Who is taking teachers seriously? This is also a challenge to us as researchers.

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